1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

I.

HISTORY

OF

THE ABIPONES.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE TERRITORY, ORIGIN, AND VARIOUS NAMES OF THE ABIPONES.

THE Abipones inhabit the province Chaco, the centre of all Paraguay; they have no fixed abodes, nor any boundaries, except what fear of their neighbours has established. They roam extensively in every direction, whenever the opportunity of attacking their enemies, or the necessity of avoiding them renders a journey advisable. The northern shore of the Rio Grande or Bermejo, which the Indians call Iñatè, was their native land in the last century. Thence they removed, to avoid the war carried on against Chaco by the Spaniards of Salta, at the commencement of this century, and migrating towards the south, took possession of a

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

valley formerly held by the Calchaquis. This territory, which is about two hundred leagues in extent, they at present occupy. But from what region their ancestors came there is no room for conjecture. Ychamenraikin, chief cacique of the Abipones in the town of St. Jeronymo, told us, that, after crossing the vast waters, they were carried hither on an ass, and this he declared he had heard from ancient men. I have often thought that the Americans originally came, step by step, from the most northern parts of Europe, which are perhaps joined to America, or separated only by a narrow frith. We have observed some resemblance in the manners and customs of the Abipones to the Laplanders, and people of Nova Zembla, and we always noticed in these savages a magnetical propensity to the north, as if they inclined towards their native soil; for when irritated by any untoward event, they cried in a threatening tone—*Mahaik quer ereëgem*, I will go to the north; though this threat meant that they would return to the northern parts of Paraguay, where their savage compatriots live at this day, free from the yoke of the Spaniards, and from Christian discipline.

But if the Americans sprung from the north of Europe, why are all the Indians of both Americas destitute of beard, in which the northern Eu-

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

of drinking-parties, worshipped those stars, because they were the nurses of Bacchus? But this pleasant idea would suit conversation better than history. It deserves attention, that, though various nations have paid divine honours to the sun, moon, and other stars, we cannot find a syllable respecting the worship of the Pleiades in any part of holy writ; unless, indeed, you say that they were adored by those nations mentioned in the 17th Chap. and the 3d verse of Deuteronomy: "That they go and serve other Gods, and worship them, the sun and moon, and all the host of heaven." For, as St. Jerome observes, the "whole host of heaven" means all the stars, including, of course, the Pleiades amongst the rest.

After long and frequent consideration of these things, it appears most probable to my mind, that the savages of Paraguay derived the knowledge and worship of the Pleiades from the ancient Peruvians; who, although they venerated God the creator and preserver of all things, (under the name of Pachacàmac,) are nevertheless said to have adored the sea, rocks, trees, and, what is of most importance to the present subject, the Pleiades, whom they called Colcà. The Inca Manco Capac, their ruler and chief lawgiver, afterwards substituted new superstitions for old ones. He decreed, that di-

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
S14 Abipon S14

vine honours should be paid to the sun. To it alone divine veneration and sacrifices were paid, though the moon also, which they call the consort of the sun, and certain stars, which they call the handmaids of the moon, were honoured with silver altars and adoration to a certain extent, but inferior to that paid a divinity. Amongst the stars they thought the Pleiades worthy of a distinguished place, and chief honour, either from the wonderful manner in which they are placed, or from their singular brightness. After the Spaniards obtained dominion over Peru by force of arms, it is credible that the Peruvians, to avoid this dreadful slavery, stole away wherever they could, and that many of them migrated into the neighbouring Tucuman, and thence, for the sake of security, into the deserts of Chaco, close by; where, amongst other superstitions they may have taught the inhabitants a religious observance of the Pleiades. But since the Abipones, you will object, cannot even express the name of God in their native tongue, and respectfully address the evil spirit by the title of their grandfather, why did they not learn from the Peruvians the name and worship of God, with a hatred and contempt for the evil spirit? The latter certainly entertained such a reverence for the God Pachacàmac, that they thought it a

174 •

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

174 part of their religion not to utter his name except on very important occasions, and whenever they did, to accompany the mention of it with great marks of reverence. On the other hand, they held the devil, whom they called Cupay, in much contempt. Why did not the Peruvians impart that reverence for God, and contempt for the evil spirit to the Abipones, at the same time that they instructed them in a religious observance of the Pleiades? Because vice is more easily learnt than virtue, as healthy persons are sooner infected by the sick, than sick ones cured by the healthy. Yet, if you persist in denying that the knowledge of the Pleiades was brought from Peru, I will oppose you no longer; but what hinders us from believing that it crept into Paraguay from the neighbouring Brazil, where the Tapuyas, formerly a fierce and numerous nation, greatly venerated the rise of the Pleiades, and worshipped those stars as divinities with singing and dancing. As no memorials are at hand from which any thing determinate can be elicited on this subject, I have thought fit to adduce all these conjectures, opinions, and probabilities which may seem in any way to relate to the evil spirit, the infamous grandfather of the Abipones, and to the Pleiades the representation of him.

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

into a hide, and carry home on a horse, a journey not unfrequently of two hundred leagues. But if the enemy presses on them, and they are forced to leave the body on the field of battle, the relations seek for the bones on the first opportunity, and take no rest till they find them, however much risk and labour must be encountered in accomplishing this. Moreover, the Abipones are not content with any sepulchre, but take especial care that fathers may lie with their sons, wives with their husbands, grandchildren with their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, and that every family should have its own burying-place. This nation, having formerly inhabited more towards the north, know that their ancestors' monuments exist there, and venerate them as something divine. They feel the most lively pleasure in mingling the bones of their countrymen, wherever, amidst their perpetual peregrinations, they may have been buried, with the bones of their ancestors. Hence it is that they dig them up and remove them so often, and carry them over immense tracts of land, till at length they repose in the ancient and woody mausoleum of their forefathers; which they distinguish by certain marks cut in the trees, and by other signs taught them by their ancestors. The Brazilians and Guaranies formerly disliked the